/186 cont./

683 An insult is taken as an offense that has legal sanction. We note the case of two co-wives who did not get on well. One day they met unexpectedly on the road. One insulted the other with obscenities (in Spanish) and spat on the ground when she passed. This led to her being considered the author of an aggressive act and having to pay an indemnity for the moral offense caused.

When obscenities refer to a woman's honor they are specially injurious, the more so when they refer to her genital organs or to the sex act.

To show open suspicion of another person is also an offensive action which is punished. The story is told how in the Nazaret orphanage some clothes which had been left all night in one of the interior patios to dry were stolen. The Father Superior, looking for the thief, walked around the vicinity visiting the huts and obtaining information. He wanted to find out indirectly who was the thief, and in each house he got new data. In one of these huts, the owners were away and only the servants were there, for which reason he did not enter but only looked in from the outside in a guarded way. This action was noticed, however, by a bond servant, who told his master, a laborer who worked at the orphanage. Time passed and the Father needed someone to accompany him on a trip and when he asked the Indian, the latter openly refused to go with him. Asked why, he said that he was terribly resentful because the suspicion expressed in the Father's act of curiosity had pained him profoundly. If he was not paid for the pain thus caused, he would not go with him. The Father had to indemnify him.

683 522 Another act considered offensive in the Guajiro mentality is to ridicule someone. The Indian has a jocular nature, but to make someone openly the butt of his jests may cause such a feeling of offense that the man whose feelings have been wounded demands payment. It is not unusual that they joke among themselves, especially under the effects of alcohol, but it is also not unusual for their feelings to be hurt very easily, and a simple joke may cause offense, even between very close friends. To erase the effect of the hurt and /187/ sorrow (as the Guajiro says) caused by

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683 being put in a ridiculous position, the individual demands a pay-
[522] ment that compensates him for what was said.

It is also considered offensive and therefore contrary to the regimen for personal safety if one man hits another without wounding him. There are two aspects to be considered in this act as aggravations: the physical, that is, the blow in itself, and the psychological, for the Guajiro thinks that by being hit in this way he has been reduced to the status of a slave or bond servant; and consequently he has not only been lowered in his standing as a free man but has also been placed on a plane of dependence with respect to the person who hit him. The indemnity must satisfy both offenses.

To tear someone's robe also has a double significance as an aggressive act: the material damage caused, which must be replaced by buying a new one (conduct of a drunken husband); and the psychological damage, as it is like injuring the person himself, since a person is identified with the clothes he wears.

Any damage to the property of a person is an aggressive act and punishable as such, and the indemnity should be greater than the loss, since the excess represents the grievance suffered.

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689 The transgression of the legal norms illustrated in the above
191 aggressive acts against the regimen for stability in La Guajira must be paid for both by a member of the society as well as by an outsider. But there are two things which can only apply to a native individual, an active member of the Guajiro community. These two things are the following.

a) Language. The Indian very much values his native language and tries to preserve it at all cost. His women do not want to learn Spanish and pretend they do not know it when they are questioned. It constitutes in itself a grave offense if one native speaks to another in Spanish instead of his native tongue. The story is told of a Guajiro who spoke to a relative in Spanish during

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
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CHAPTER 4

Towards a Mirage

Our donkey caravan tripped along between the sand dunes at a gentle trot. The sun poured what the Indians call its molten gold over us in fierce waves. The donkeys were slow, but our riding-mules were fresh and even tried a trick or two, throwing our photographer, who was no expert, into a cactus bush. That was a pity, for the spikes were as long as knitting needles and unpleasantly hard and sharp. The Indians laughed heartlessly. It was perhaps the only amusing thing that happened to them on the whole trip.

We had no idea what our men were called. As I have already mentioned, the Indians' first names are secret. They always say: 'I have no name' or 'Call me what you like'. Your name is part of your personality. You cannot surrender it to strangers. If you know another's name, you can acquire a certain hold over him, just as you can harm him, if you had some of his hairs or nail-clippings with which to work magic. The family name, that of the clan, is naturally public. White people usually give Spanish names to the Indians with whom they have to deal, and there are plenty of Juans and Josés in the peninsula now. Usually, however, you give a nickname to the Indians you have temporarily in your service, just as they give their employers nicknames. We discovered that they had christened our photographer 'The Red One'. He was not red-headed at all, but very fair, and because of that, his face was always highly coloured in the heat. I could not get out of them what they called my wife and me. I suppose they thought that we would be offended or regard it as insubordination. They had been